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ABSTRACT

This report describes the nature of the partnership between the George Washington University (GWU) and Fairfax County, Virginia, Public Schools (FCPS) to support the design of GWU's advanced Master's degree program and to support National Board for Professional Teaching Standards candidates as they pursue certification. Section 1 discusses the changing context of teacher education, focusing on the reform agenda. Section 2 looks at the background of both GWU and FCPS. This section examines the partnership experience by describing the evolution of the partnership, discussing teacher leadership roles, and illustrating what worked in the partnership. It also presents reflections on and experiences with creating Master's programs aligned with National Board Standards, and it discusses the importance of such an alignment. Considerations for other institutions of higher education wishing to develop partnerships with local school districts are presented. The paper concludes with lessons learned and recommendations for others in aligning master's degree programs with National Board Standards. Contains 37 references. (SM)

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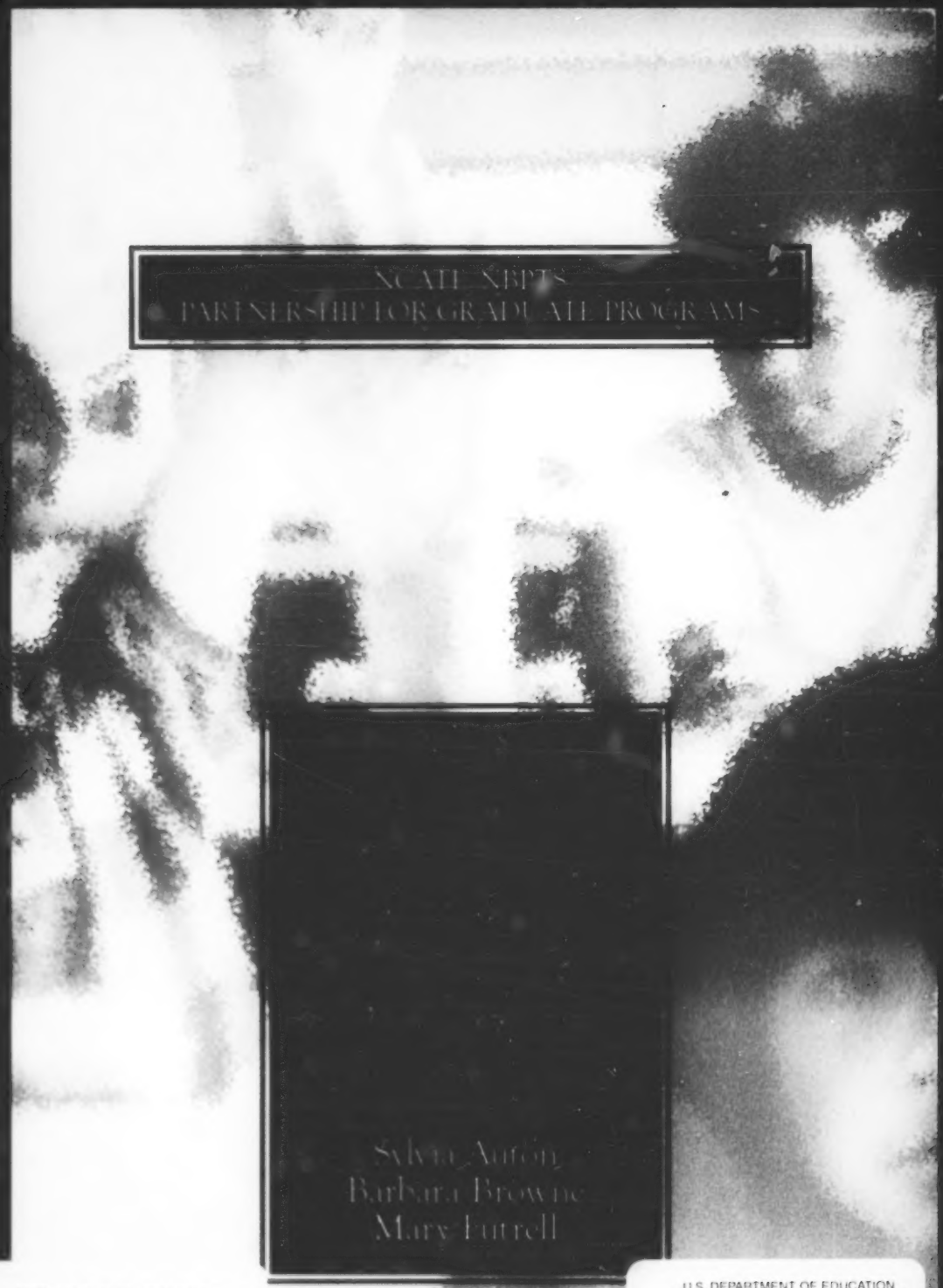

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Creating Partnerships to Improve Quality Teaching

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NCATE/NBPTS Partnership for Graduate Programs

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Preface

New emphasis on student and teacher performance is profoundly influencing the ways that teachers are selected, prepared, licensed, and recognized. Policymakers now expect teachers and teacher candidates to show evidence of knowledge and skill and the ability to apply them to teach effectively.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has accomplished groundbreaking work in the development of standards for effective teaching in specific subject areas, and assessments geared to measure teacher performance against the standards.

The National Board's standards contain a vision of accomplished teaching which can become a framework for the redesign of advanced teacher development programs in universities.

NCATE is working in collaboration with the National Board to help institutions modify advanced programs so that they are aligned with NBPTS propositions for accomplished practice. The work is part of the National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching (NPEAT), established by the U.S. Department of Education as a collaborative effort to enhance quality in teaching and teacher preparation.

The NCATE/NBPTS partnership encourages schools of education to develop standards-based master's degree programs that are designed to help teachers improve their practice and develop the tools to better assess their own effectiveness. Unlike many current master's programs that focus on process, the revised master's programs will be geared specifically to improving the art of teaching, which in turn, will aid student learning.

The project draws school personnel into partnerships with institutions of higher education, creating new higher education and school faculty roles, new opportunities for research, and new structures within the school, college, or department of education and the P-12 school.

There is currently no one best way for higher education institutions to align their advanced master's degree programs with NBPTS standards. Nor are there comprehensive models from which to learn what works best. As more institutions develop their own models and share their successes and experiences, many institutions will be able to draw from an expanding knowledge base.

The George Washington University has taken on this challenge, forging new territory. A major finding from their collaborative work with a local school district is that partnerships between higher education and local school districts play a vital role in developing programs that support NBPTS certification.

This paper by Browne, Auton, and Futrell describes the nature of the partnership developed between The George Washington University and Fairfax County Public Schools to support the redesign of GW's advanced master's degree program and to support National Board candidates as they pursue certification. Although the case study highlights the work of a single program, the findings and lessons learned have implications for other institutions involved in promoting the National Board's vision of accomplished teaching.

Boyce Williams, Vice President for Institutional Relations, NCATE

Jane Leibbrand, Vice President for Communications, NCATE

Editors

Introduction

Facing the complexities of changing practice in education, faculty and administrators in institutions of higher education, and teachers and administrators in P-12 institutions are being asked to rise to the call and respond effectively to ever-increasing demands. Professional development of teachers must be conceptualized as a lifelong career process, and teacher education must be examined and placed at the forefront of the reform agenda in both schools and universities.

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to stimulate discussion about one aspect of the professional development reform agenda—how partnerships between institutions of higher education (IHEs) and local education agencies (LEAs) can contribute to developing master's degrees aligned with the standards of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). This paper presents a case study of a partnership between The George Washington University (GW) Graduate School of Education and Human Development, Washington, D.C. and the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), Fairfax, Virginia.

The paper will address the following topics:

- The development of a partnership (GW and FCPS) focused on the work of the NBPTS.
- The formation of partnerships between universities and schools of education and LEAs to develop and implement master's programs aligned with National Board standards.

Related to the above topics are additional questions about partnerships and master's degrees aligned with the NBPTS:

- Why is it important for IHEs to partner with LEAs ?
- Why is it important to include teachers in the partnership?
- What helps or hinders a partnership?
- What is needed to build a base of support for a partnership leading to a master's program?

In particular, this paper will share the evolution of the GW/FCPS partnership and the influence of national reform on the development of the partnership. We will use the partnership as a basis to address the above questions. Then we will discuss how these original efforts provided the link to the evolution of a master's degree compatible with

National Board standards, but not specifically targeted to NBPTS certification. Finally, candid reflections about the process, and recommendations based on current literature and teacher experiences will provide the basis for thoughtful discourse on the original questions.

Changing Context of Teacher Education: The Reform Agenda

The importance of knowledgeable, caring teachers is critical in the transformation of schools. Preparing, recruiting, and sustaining high quality teachers must be a key goal in education reform efforts. "The school reform movement has ignored the obvious: What teachers know and can do makes the crucial difference in what children learn. Student learning in this country will improve only when we focus our efforts on improving teaching." (The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996, p. 7) This call and others (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Dilworth & Imig, 1995; Hardman, McDonnell, Welch, 1997; Joyce & Calhoun, 1995) highlight the compelling need to address the quality of teaching, and efforts that focus on professional development beginning with preservice education, and continuing throughout a teacher's career.

The need to develop partnerships to unify efforts across the continuum of professional development is essential to sustained teacher improvement. Teacher educators must develop new ways of thinking about the continued preparation of teachers. To expand professional development and have it fulfill its promise of transforming teaching and learning, deep and significant relationships between P-12 schools and schools of education must be established (Dilworth & Imig, 1995). This requires creative approaches to working collaboratively to develop a "seamless system" of teacher development. Barriers to traditional ways of thinking and acting must be eliminated to open up the path leading to the creation of continuous professional development. The roles and responsibilities of potential partners must be evaluated to create new relationships centered in principles that advance quality improvement in teaching. The call from the field is clear—create new ways of thinking about the way we prepare and continue to train teachers (National Commission Report, 1996; Wise, 1996; Wise and Leibbrand, 1996). As Goodlad (1990) states, "The renewal of schools, teachers, and the programs that educate teachers must proceed simultaneously." (p. 3)

The impact of the standards movement across the education profession further documents the need to work collaboratively to effect change. Standards for teachers are emerging simultaneously as standards for student learning in respective content areas are being developed. The National Commission, for example, recommends that states "use the

NBPTS as the benchmark for accomplished teaching." (Darling-Hammond, 1996, p. 196) At the same time, others are suggesting that the NBPTS core propositions and certification area standards be considered to provide the focus and direction to redesign teacher preparation and teacher development (Buday & Kelly, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 1996, 1997; Dilworth & Imig, 1995). Over the past decade, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), and now the NBPTS have worked to align their standards to create consistent sets of standards for the profession across the continuum of professional development. "These standards (NCATE, INTASC, NBPTS) are aligned with one another and with new standards for student learning in the disciplines, and they are tied to performance-based assessments of teacher knowledge and skills." (Darling-Hammond, 1997, Appendix C)

The National Commission (1996) recommends that school districts, states, and professional associations cooperate to make teaching a true profession. This involves developing a career continuum placing teaching at the forefront of the profession and rewarding teachers for their knowledge and skills. A significant step toward making teaching a true profession was taken in 1987 when the NBPTS was established to "create high standards for what teachers need to know and be able to do, and to certify teachers who meet that standard." A special task force consisting of members of the education community, including one of the authors, Dr. Mary Futrell (then president of the National Education Association) and members of the lay community worked together to design NBPTS and develop its agenda.

Today, the NBPTS consists of stakeholders representing the global education community, a majority of whom are teachers. Because both GW and FCPS were committed to the goals and standards of the NBPTS, they decided to collaborate through a formal partnership to work with teachers who were preparing for NBPTS certification, as well as to provide a forum for ongoing professional development.

In light of these concepts—high quality teaching, school/university partnerships, and teacher standards—the next section of this paper describes highlights and reflections of the experiences of a school/university partnership which was designed to co-mingle efforts of both institutions to create a model of lifelong teacher development.

To accomplish that goal, the partnership—

- ❖ focuses on quality learning,
- ❖ puts teachers in the forefront for changing practice,

- ❖ promotes a collaboration which represents a new relationship between a school system and a school of education, and
- ❖ uses the NBPTS as the anchor to guide the partnership.

The Partnership: Background of Each Institution

To better understand the GW/FCPS partnership, each institution must be described briefly.

The George Washington University (GW)

The George Washington University is a private institution of higher education in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. The area includes several school systems, educational organizations, and colleges and universities, all serving a very diverse population of students and families. The GW Graduate School of Education and Human Development (GSEHD) offers degrees in a wide array of disciplines related to school, community, business, and government settings. It is accredited by NCATE. The GSEHD is a member of the Holmes Partnership, which supports NBPTS certified teachers.

Throughout the past four years, GW has taken several initiatives to advance teacher professionalism linked to the NBPTS. These include—

- ❖ recruiting and supporting teachers,
- ❖ developing linkages with school systems and other colleges and universities, and
- ❖ aligning university programs with National Board standards.

GW was awarded a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts in 1995. The purpose of the grant was to develop a model to support teachers seeking Board certification. A key feature of the model was a collaboration between GW and Norfolk State University (NSU—located in the Norfolk-Hampton, Virginia metropolitan area). These two urban higher education institutions worked to implement support for teachers seeking certification from the NBPTS in their respective geographic areas. GW and NSU reached out to many school districts and teachers as a part of their recruitment and support efforts. Most notable for GW was the partnership that subsequently evolved with FCPS.

The GW tradition of working with teachers and school districts has been in place for many years. For example, GW is now working with teachers in five districts in the D.C. metropolitan area, including FCPS, in support efforts related to the NBPTS. GW has had ongoing programs in

FCPS for many years, including a professional development school, year-long internships in its Transition to Teaching program, student teacher placements, and other individual faculty initiatives. These collaborative relationships contributed to the basis for the collaborative partnership experience described in this paper.

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS)

Fairfax County Public Schools, GW's partner, is a large school system outside Washington, D.C. that is characterized by diversity and high performance. The demographics of the district reveal its diversity: over 150,000 students are served by FCPS, over 100 languages are spoken in the district, 35 percent of the students are minority, 20 percent of the students are language minority, and 18 percent of the students receive free or reduced cost lunches. High performance is also a hallmark of the district as demonstrated by the fact that over 80 percent of the students go on to college, drop out rates remain low, and over half of the student population scores in the top 25 percent on nationally administered achievement tests in reading, language arts, and mathematics.

One important characteristic of FCPS is that staff development is highly valued—not only by teachers and administrators, but also by the school board and the community (Towers Perrin Benefits Study, 1998; Fairfax County Council of PTAs, Budget Report, 1997). In the recent past, a growing student population and budget shortfalls in Fairfax County forced reductions in staff development, but when economics allowed, staff development was one of the first items restored. Currently, many school-based and systemwide staff development offerings are made available to teachers, as well as opportunities for teachers to pursue individual learning needs. For example, a Continuing Education Board composed of teachers (including those with NBPTS certification) and administrators (including the principal of a professional development school that is in the GW/FCPS partnership) advises the district on staff development needs. The Continuing Education Board is very supportive of NBPTS certification, professional development schools, and the entire continuum of professional development, from induction through advanced certification.

Perhaps more important than opportunities for staff development is the desire among many FCPS teachers for continued professional development and the belief that NBPTS certification should be a part of career-long professional development (Continuing Education Board, 1993; IMPACT II, 1998).

The Partnership Experience

Partnerships designed collaboratively between school systems and schools, colleges, and departments of education provide a context for facilitating the integration of preservice classroom instruction with experience in the field; contribute to the professional development of practicing teachers, administrators, and teacher educators; and allow university classroom instructors to be more sensitive to current issues in public education (Dana, 1998).

Evolution of the Partnership

GW/FCPS forged new territory in developing a partnership anchored in the NBPTS, both with regard to using National Board standards to inform and support GW programs and in collaborating with FCPS in the structure and purpose of the partnership. Throughout the development of the partnership the focus was on collaborating to provide professional development for teachers who were seeking NBPTS certification. As the collaboration evolved, it became apparent that there should be a link with what was currently being done in master's programs and the entire continuum of teacher education. That provided the foundation to begin restructuring teacher education in light of newly established national standards for teacher certification both within the university and in the school system. The directions of the partnership are at the leading edge of similar movements around the country. Many IHEs are being challenged to redesign their teacher education programs, many school districts are rethinking and redesigning their staff development programs, and many teachers and parents are expecting them to do so.

Sometimes it is difficult to say precisely how the first step in a partnership began, but most would concur that this partnership was initiated by faculty and staff in both institutions seeking ways to support and learn from teachers seeking NBPTS certification. That was over five years ago. Since then, the partnership has become more complex and multifaceted. Currently, the partnership includes not only the NBPTS initiative, but a professional development school, and more extensive work centered around the Holmes Partnership goals that support the direction of the project on which this paper is based. Anchored in the National Board standards and supportive of Holmes Partnership goals, the partnership exemplifies change supported by national agendas and the standards movement.

During the time conversations were taking place between GW and FCPS about support for the NBPTS, key leadership at both FCPS and GW,

including the superintendent and dean, were—as they continue to be—supporters of teacher professionalism and of the NBPTS. An essential condition of any partnership is strong support from institutional leadership (Blackwell, 1998). The GW/FCPS partnership is fortunate in that regard as both the dean and the superintendent are firmly committed to this new partnership and have remained staunch supporters. In addition, both institutions had prior positive experiences with partnerships.

It should be noted that the partnership did not begin with the goal to align preservice master's programs with National Board standards. Initial efforts involved recruiting and supporting teachers seeking NBPTS certification. Efforts to bring together multiple parties and to support teachers seeking NBPTS certification met with varying degrees of success. The experiences and lessons learned provide the basis for administrators and faculty at GW and teachers and administrators in FCPS to realize the full value and potential for aligning professional development efforts with National Board standards across the life span of a teacher's career.

From the outset, FCPS encouraged staff to attend NBPTS national informational meetings and FCPS teachers were encouraged to take part in pilot testing and in the development of assessments. Funds were made available to pay for twenty teachers to participate in the NBPTS certification process.

However, since this was a new initiative, there was no system in place to support these teacher candidates. Both the teachers and the school district were charting new territory. At that time, GW stepped forward and volunteered to work as a partner with the teachers and the FCPS staff development office to assist in and learn from the NBPTS certification process. That process has continued and expanded.

Teacher Leadership Roles

The first year of teacher support was devoted to assisting teachers who were preparing for NBPTS certification. When the first teachers achieved NBPTS certification, there was a joint celebration of the university, the school system, and most importantly of the teachers in recognition of their accomplishments. The National Board certified teachers (NBCTs) then took a leadership role in designing, developing, and teaching a pre-assessment seminar to prospective candidates. This seminar was intended to help potential teacher candidates learn more about the certification process, give them opportunities to simulate the process, and to gain skills in reflecting on their teaching. NBCTs have continued to offer the seminar, serving as role models for candidates and providing realistic and relevant answers to questions they may have.

GW faculty led support groups and provided assistance throughout the process once teachers committed to the NBPTS certification process. The importance of the GW faculty support has been evident. For example, one of the first NBCTs stated that she did not know if she would have stayed with or even understood the process without the GW support sessions (Carol Sultzman, 1998). The university faculty also benefited from the support efforts. They engaged in interactive inquiry with "accomplished" teachers and realized the value NBPTS might have on teacher preparation programs.

Currently, with increasing numbers of NBCTs, GW continues to help coordinate the support sessions. The NBCTs are integral members in all phases of support (pre-candidacy, candidacy, and post-candidacy) for new NBPTS candidates. Overall, the partnership between teachers, the schools, and the university illustrates another key condition in partnership success: learning from one another and respecting the work of all partners.

What Worked—A Partnership Experience

The first year of the GW Pew project, which occurred at the same time the NBPTS offered pilot programs for teachers seeking certification, GW reached out to several school systems to provide information about the NBPTS in order to assist systems, and hopefully, teachers into the NBPTS process. FCPS had already committed to the NBPTS and was supporting teachers who sought certification.

The NBPTS efforts were new and the value of the innovation was yet to be proven. However, FCPS and GW became committed to the process from the beginning.

FCPS was involved in NBPTS pilot programs, had teacher candidates who were seeking NBPTS certification, attended all meetings, and received GW support as teachers developed their portfolios and prepared for the assessment center activities. FCPS also had support from leadership and a commitment to the idea that the process would improve teaching. Initially, FCPS invested resources by identifying key personnel who would be involved with the NBPTS efforts and would work with GW. FCPS realized the need to develop support programs even before teachers became candidates for NBPTS certification, and shared information about the contents of a course to support teachers in the pre-candidacy phase of NBPTS certification at cross-district meetings initiated by GW.

GW remained committed throughout the process in facilitating NBPTS support efforts in school districts. FCPS's commitment continued also. FCPS committed additional resources, developed a course to provide teachers with an overview of Board certification, and allocated funding to pay the fee for teachers seeking certification.

The GW/FCPS experience demonstrates the primary elements for a successful partnership. Partnerships must have top leadership support and motivation and investment from key stakeholders for the partnership to succeed. FCPS was motivated internally; they believed in improving quality teaching by focusing on teachers, and they were in a position to commit to the initiative immediately. Currently, states in our surrounding area are now encouraging systems to recruit teachers to seek NBPTS certification and are providing monetary incentives. As the external motivators increase, more systems are becoming involved and are seeking support for NBPTS efforts.

These experiences mirror other partnership development and improvement efforts. As indicated above, we found that certain conditions must be present in order for partnerships to be successful. This is not to suggest that partnerships will automatically achieve their goals. Not only must the leadership support the partnership and the goals, but also the stakeholders—such as the faculty, school personnel, and teachers—must have shared ownership of the work of the partnership.

One of the conditions for a successful partnership, we discovered, is a commitment to innovation. The investment in the partnership may originate from internal forces, from external pressures, or from a combination of both. Often, partnerships may begin with a limited number of participants from the IHEs and the school district. The key is to sustain and support their work so that other faculty and school personnel will see the value of the efforts. As a result of the GW/FCPS partnership, more teachers are achieving certification. As states and national organizations have begun to encourage involvement, more schools and universities have become involved in partnership efforts. Other schools and universities have expressed interest in the value of the work of the GW/FCPS partnership and similar efforts are emerging elsewhere.

Another condition we found for a successful partnership is availability of sufficient resources, which must go beyond financial support. While financial support is essential, resources also imply sufficient knowledgeable personnel to lead and develop the work of the partnership. A third condition is a positive environment in the partner institutions (such as a climate that encourages risk-taking and collaboration). These conditions were in place with the GW/FCPS partnership. The conditions present for

the development of the innovation to support teachers who are candidates for NBPTS certification are also those that will help build other innovations—such as partnerships between teacher preparation programs and schools as they continue to improve teacher development across the continuum of a teacher's career. These experiences will provide the foundation to develop master's programs in partnership with teachers and schools aligned with National Board standards.

Reflections and Experiences on Creating Master's Programs Aligned With National Board Standards

To address the main question of how an IHE might partner with a LEA to create master's degree programs aligned with National Board standards, we identified the following questions, cited at the beginning of the paper:

- Why is it important for IHEs to partner with LEAs?
- Why is it important to include teachers in the partnership?
- What helps or hinders a partnership?
- What is needed to build a base of support for such a master's program?

We will address each of these questions in turn.

Why is it Important for IHEs to Partner with LEAs?

The linkage of teacher preparation programs and the continuing professional development of teachers along a career continuum would be enhanced if universities and schools developed a shared framework for this continuum of teacher education. Jarchow (1998) reports that staff development models that provide "career-long enhancement programs that allow for professional growth, teacher input, change through reflection, and exposure to best practices have every chance for success."(p. 120) As GW and FCPS worked with teachers seeking NBPTS certification, it became evident that the NBPTS provided such a framework.

Aligning master's degrees with the NBPTS propositions and developing school/university partnerships linking state-of-the-art content and pedagogy with quality internship experiences can lead to strengthened master's degree programs. The literature in the field of staff development has pointed in this direction for a number of years. Recently, the paradigm shifts taking place in staff development have been documented by Dennis Sparks, Executive Director, National Staff Development Council, and Stephanie Hirsch, Associate Executive Director, in their publication *A*

Paradigm Shift in Staff Development (1997). Two of the major shifts they cite are—

- ❖ "from a focus on adult needs and satisfaction to a focus on student needs and learning outcomes, and changes in on-the-job behaviors" (p. 13), and

- ❖ "from training conducted away from the job as the primary delivery system for staff development to multiple forms of job-embedded learning" (p. 14).

Teacher education—which encompasses both education for preservice students and staff development of practicing professionals—has similar reform stances. At the National Congress on Teacher Education (1995), sponsored by the Association of Teacher Educators and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Richard Riley, Secretary of Education, addressed the following comments to university and school educators:

> ...Professional development programs must demonstrate that they truly make a difference in teacher performance and student achievement...When teachers leave the nation's schools of education, their professors should not just wish them a happy life and never see them again. Professors should welcome teachers back after they have been out in the real world, for they will have good ideas for improving teacher education. Furthermore, professors should go into the elementary and secondary schools and share their experience and ideas. The doors should be open on both ends." (p 180)

The open door concept and a more fluid communication among schools and universities can build a strong base of support for master's degrees. Such master's degrees are neither university-based nor school-based, but partnership-based and embedded in both the work of the schools and the universities. As stated in the mission of the Holmes Partnership, "If university faculties are to become more expert educators of teachers, they must make better use of expert teachers in the education of other teachers...In addition, schools must become places where both teachers and university faculty can systematically inquire into practice and improve it." (p. 4)

A shared commitment also is an essential condition to assist a school/university partnership in creating a master's degree program. The central commitment of the GW/FCPS partnership was on developing

high standards of classroom practice and helping teachers become successful so that their students would achieve at high levels.

A shared commitment toward enhancing quality teaching across teacher education can be aligned with the core propositions and process established by the NBPTS. It can help to structure discussions designed to change the face of teacher development across the continuum of teacher development and lead to collaborative partnerships between all stakeholders—teachers, universities, and school systems—resulting in benefits for children and families. Thus, focusing on teachers and their experiences in the classroom in partnership with universities and schools can foster changes in teacher training and practice.

Why is it Important for Teachers to be Involved?

A caring, competent, and qualified teacher for every child is the most important ingredient in education reform and, we believe, the most frequently overlooked (Report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996).

"Valuing teachers' voluntary, ongoing changes in practice is one way of empowering them in the process of educational improvement." (Kadel-Taras, S., 1998, p. 151) In the GW/FCPS partnership, teachers and teacher educators worked together by starting with the needs of the teachers who were preparing for NBPTS certification. This initiative put teachers in the center of the intellectual work, led to leadership positions for the NBCTs in working with other teachers, and provided data and insights to teacher educators working in partnership for the restructuring of master's programs aligned with National Board standards. The shared commitment of the partners to include teachers and learn from them was vital to the success of the partnership.

As with other professionals, teachers seek ways to become more proficient and more successful. While success in other fields is often measured by financial rewards or advancement in the organization, teacher success, both from the teacher's perspective and from the field, is more closely identified with student success. Usually, a great teacher is described by the impact on his or her students—how the teacher was able to help students overcome great odds or inspire students to remarkable achievements.

How would Anne Sullivan's success be defined? Her pioneering work in teaching techniques for people with disabilities is inextricably linked to her student, Helen Keller. Likewise, the teachers supported by the GW/FCPS partnership over the past years sought NBPTS certification

with few extrinsic rewards. They did not have salary increases or other incentives to motivate them to seek Board certification. They were motivated by intrinsic factors related to their values of teaching. Carol Horn, NBCT, describes the process as "the most meaningful evaluation I have ever experienced. It challenged me to think and reflect on the best teaching practices that I could use in my classroom with my students. I felt my students greatly benefited because of the reflection and the opportunities it gave me to collaborate with and learn from other teachers. I continually evaluated my practice and revised it based on the needs of my students. I continue to do that as a certified teacher."

We believe that it is crucial in developing master's degree programs for the developers to recognize the powerful impact of student success on teacher success and satisfaction. One of the primary strengths of the NBPTS vision is that what happens in the classroom is what matters most. Marlene Henriques, NBCT, explains what the NBPTS process has meant to her in teaching the students in her class and in mentoring teacher interns: "The most valuable experience in terms of my own teaching practice is the reflective process. I am now able to see why I do different things, to change my way of presenting material, and to understand better at what level each of my children is operating so that I can meet his or her individual needs."

Feedback from the NBCTs involved in the partnership validated the reasons for including the teachers at all levels of teacher preparation. They are reflective practitioners who want to share their work and commitment to quality education. They are an untapped resource that could and should be an integral component of any quality teacher development program.

The NBCTs have helped provide the base of support for the GW/FCPS partnership. NBCTs have indeed been the best avenue to convince others of the benefits of NBPTS certification. They have—

- ❖ been guest lecturers in classes and provided a definitive link between theory and practice for the students and faculty alike,
- ❖ provided leadership and mentorship roles in professional development activities at their school sites,
- ❖ served as advocates at the local, state, and national level regarding the value of improving quality education,
- ❖ served as essential members on our local Holmes Partnership group and other organizations representing teacher issues, and

- ❖ been invaluable resources in contributing to quality teacher education.

In the discussion above, our intent is not to negate effective teacher education at the university or school district, but to emphasize that it is the teacher's practice in the classroom—informed by the conceptual foundations of teaching and the growing body of research literature—that should be the core of a master's degree. This focus should help improve teacher development at all levels.

The NBCTs and candidates are already bridging the gap between the teacher preparation programs and their practices. Recently, at a support session for NBPTS teacher candidates, one candidate reflected how important the National Board standards had become to her practice. She not only was using them to guide the development of her portfolio, but also used them in working with an intern in her classroom. The intern is currently in her final semester in a teacher preparation program. Upon reading the standards and discussing them with her internship supervisor, the intern commented how she appreciated the content and clarity of the standards. She could see a linkage between her master's coursework and her classroom experiences. She further added that she wished the university and the school could use the standards to link theory and practice.

Another NBCT related how she uses the standards to enhance critical thinking in her interns and to help them clarify and justify their reasons for approaches with children. As Marlene Henriques, NBCT, states, "It has also enhanced my student teacher's teaching. Now I can tell my student teachers why I use certain approaches in the classroom so they can better understand the relationship between theory and practice and apply those principles to their own teaching someday." The NBCTs provide compelling evidence that National Board standards already provide a framework to link university programs and practice in the field.

What has been so gratifying about working with teachers seeking National Board certification—for both GW and FCPS—is that the collaboration among all the participants has focused on the teacher's agenda of practice in the classroom. It was teacher-initiated and teacher-driven, focusing on reflection and improvement of practice. It has been particularly exciting to see how the teachers have taken an ever-increasing leadership role in the partnership. Initially, leadership and support of teachers seeking National Board certification focused on university faculty and staff development personnel. As teachers became NBPTS certified they became the major supporters of new teachers seeking

National Board certification. As their level of knowledge and leadership expertise became evident, they assumed a primary role in the partnership. A natural extension of their support efforts would be to include them in efforts to rethink master's programs aligned with National Board standards.

What Factors Support a Partnership?

There are many factors that can nurture a partnership. The following essential conditions for a partnership were identified by the GW/FCPS partnership:

- ❖ information and knowledge about the NBPTS process by all constituents,
- ❖ commitment and investment by all involved, leading to an acceptance of the process,
- ❖ leadership (broad-based) from each system involved to support the development and changes needed, and
- ❖ allocation of resources that will support the commitment and lead to sustained involvement.

Information and Knowledge

As with any new initiative, there must be an understanding of the content and process and an investment in the value of the innovation. For our partnership, all stakeholders became aware of the NBPTS process and its benefits and challenges. Teachers, university faculty, and school personnel were key to developing wide-based support for the concept. However, this took time. In the GW/FCPS partnership, teachers initially were unsure of the benefits and continued to be at times overwhelmed with the vast amount of work and time it took to complete the NBPTS assessment process. As teachers completed the assessment and shared with university faculty and school personnel the benefits to their work, other teachers and those faculty and school personnel working to support the teachers have realized its full potential for enhancing the quality of teaching.

School personnel and university faculty who supported the teachers gained first-hand knowledge about the process, its benefits, and its challenges. However, the knowledge of those few leaders had to be transferred to other university faculty, teachers, and school personnel in order for the work to be sustained and expanded. It was necessary to build an understanding of the National Board's work and to demonstrate its value toward the vision of improving teacher education. It was impor-

tant to share all knowledge about the NBPTS with university administrators and other faculty, as well as with school administrators and teachers.

It took time for teachers, university faculty/administrators, and school personnel to realize the full value of the NBPTS and its relationship to teacher development. We are just beginning our work of aligning our teacher preparation programs with National Board standards. We want to encourage more teachers to seek NBPTS certification, and we plan to continue to integrate this concept into staff development programs. At each level, each institution must ask how much time it can commit to changing its programs.

The GW/FCPS partnership took a number of actions to inform stakeholders about the NBPTS. These actions included—

- ❖ sharing NBPTS materials with faculty and school personnel,
- ❖ inviting NBCTs to present to superintendents, school principals, other teachers and university faculty, and
- ❖ providing NBCTs with opportunities to serve on leadership committees at the schools and universities and to serve as intern supervisors.

The NBCTs demonstrated the quality of their teaching and shared the enthusiasm they have for the NBPTS process. This opened up and encouraged dialogue about the NBPTS at all levels and provided information and knowledge needed to begin to align our programs with Board standards.

Commitment and Investment

To expand on the GW/FCPS partnership efforts to change existing master's programs, multiple efforts had to occur which included both faculty and school system personnel. Understanding the full potential that the NBPTS process may have on teacher professional development became apparent to GW/FCPS partnership participants as teachers who completed the assessment process shared their insights. These teachers were central to getting other teachers and university faculty committed to the process. As Nancy Areglado, NBCT, states, "The NBPTS process forced me to really become a reflective learner...it changed me as a teacher...it helped me grow as a professional."

The impact is apparent beyond the GW/FCPS experience. As Linda Gonzalez, NBCT, stated in *Teacher to Teacher* (1996), "NBPTS certification is a journey that challenges each teacher to search for the depth of knowledge and skill acquired in his or her teaching career." In order to convince

people of the value of the NBPTS process we must share messages such as these with the educational community. Who better to promote the concept than teachers who have had the experience of the NBPTS assessment process? In the GW/FCPS partnership, a network of universities and school systems was established to share the impact of the NBPTS on teacher education.

Leadership

Leadership support across the educational community was also needed in order to align teacher preparation programs with National Board standards and to begin to determine its effects. In our partnership, the top educational leaders gave their commitment to the partnership. GW faculty and FCPS administrators were also willing to commit to the partnership and to the teachers who would seek certification.

If changes are to be made in other teacher preparation programs at universities, it is obvious the faculty must be invested and take leadership. Once faculty commitment is firmly rooted, other partners can be included in the process to collaborate on new programs or to modify existing programs. For some university faculty and school personnel, a commitment from educational organizations, state leaders, and national organizations may provide incentives for leaders to become involved. For example, as national organizations are taking the lead in linking standards (INTASC, NBPTS, and NCATE), the leadership in institutions may be encouraged and see the advantages of making changes in current master's programs. At the conclusion of this paper we talk specifically about such changes.

Resources

Resources, both human and financial, are critical to the initial and sustained commitment of a new program. Initially, GW received support from the Pew Charitable Trusts to support the teachers. This enabled the university faculty and school personnel to become more knowledgeable about the NBPTS, to realize the impact it can have on teachers, and to realize the importance of integrating the skills, knowledge, and dispositions of the NBPTS into teacher preparation and development. The faculty at GW who worked on the project were willing to commit time to the efforts as the value to teacher education became evident. Because the partnership centered on the NBPTS, it was critical to have resources for the teachers to go through the certification process. FCPS paid the teachers' fees to apply for NBPTS certification and committed personnel to support them.

In order to sustain the commitment and involvement, both systems had to continue to inform others from their respective institutions of the process, share the apparent positive impact on teachers, expand the leadership to include others, and find the resources to continue to grow and develop the initiative. "While the creation of a community of teacher/leaders can lead to dramatic and permanent changes in America's schools, it will require the dedicated efforts of all members of the education community to make those changes come about." (Buday & Kelly, 1996, p.219)

Coming Full Circle: Aligning Master's Programs with National Board Standards

The importance of the NBPTS assessment process to teachers in the field, school personnel, and university faculty supporting teachers seeking NBPTS certification has been demonstrated by those who have participated in the GW/FCPS partnership. The potential for merging NBPTS standards into teacher preparation across the continuum of teacher preparation and development holds great promise for improving the quality of education and creating a seamless system of teacher preparation. As we embark on the possibility of changing the way we prepare teachers, we should consider the following questions:

- Why would an IHE want to partner with an LEA to align its master's programs with National Board standards?

- What options might be considered as an IHE aligns its master's programs with National Board standards?

The following discussion draws on the lessons learned from the experiences of the GW/FCPS partnership in its efforts to support teachers seeking NBPTS certification. It is hoped that these insights can promote a discourse related to aligning teacher education programs with National Board standards.

Why Would an IHE Want to Partner with an LEA to Align its Master's Programs with National Board Standards?

The work of supporting teachers as they seek NBPTS certification has led both the faculty at GW and the teachers and administrators at FCPS to realize the following:

- *Teachers value the process.* They informed us that it was one of the most rewarding and compelling professional development

experiences in their career. Including teachers as partners validates their expertise and their professionalism.

❖ *Skills requiring inquiry and reflective practice are embedded in the NBPTS assessment process.* Supporting teachers as they seek NBPTS certification led to the awareness that the skills, knowledge, and dispositions of National Board standards promote strategies for inquiry about a teacher's practice, and require teachers to think critically about their teaching and problem solving skills and to interpret and analyze their work leading to revised practice. These are skills that should be promoted in teacher preparation programs and in all teacher development programs. This can provide the basis for subsequent learning and development related to practice.

❖ *National groups (NCATE & INTASC) are beginning to merge their outcomes and standards with those of the NBPTS.* These groups touch the professional development continuum, including university and school systems, and help to provide a consistent framework to articulate expectations for teachers throughout their careers.

❖ *The standards of the NBPTS provide a framework for teacher preparation programs.* Certain NBPTS assessment components provide activities that may be integrated into existing course work and assignments to strengthen and promote deeper inquiry into practice.

❖ *The NBPTS core propositions and standards for each certification area provide a common philosophical base that can serve to link preservice teachers to experienced teachers who serve as internship supervisors and mentors.* This provides a common linkage between teacher preparation and teacher development.

❖ *Our work in supporting teachers also revealed that some teachers did not possess the needed skills, knowledge, and dispositions to achieve NBPTS certification.* We asked ourselves, "What do they need to achieve?" But more important, "What could or should have been done to prepare teacher educators for NBPTS certification?" At the university level, we pondered, "Are all of our graduates prepared with the needed skills, knowledge, and dispositions to be 'accomplished' teachers?" These questions speak to the need to improve current preservice programs (both undergraduate and master's) and to develop "advanced" degree programs aligned with National Board standards.

These insights have reinforced our efforts to encourage the alignment of teacher preparation programs with National Board standards and to continue to support teachers as they seek NBPTS certification.

What Options Might be Considered as an IHE Aligns its Master's Programs with National Board Standards?

The experiences of the GW/FCPS partnership highlight the value of working together when making change. The insights are greater, the vision is broader, and feedback is garnered from the greater educational community. Our experiences validated the need to be creative in developing efforts related to the NBPTS. We definitely do not advocate only one approach or suggest that all programs should look alike. The experiences of the partnership revealed that there may be a continuum of opportunities related to aligning master's programs with NBPTS certification. Master's degree programs aligned with National Board standards provide the framework needed to develop rigorous, practice-oriented teacher preparation programs.

The partnership between GW and FCPS was not created with the intent of changing master's programs, but was based on the need to provide professional development for teachers working toward NBPTS certification. However, the process laid the foundation for realizing the value of National Board standards and how they could contribute to developing master's degrees that are benchmarked on the standards.

Described below are areas to consider as we think about and discuss improving or creating master's degrees that are aligned with National Board standards.

Option A

At the preservice level, schools of education should consider aligning existing master's programs with NBPTS core propositions and standards. This requires carefully evaluating and reflecting on the current program and determining what changes are needed to reflect National Board standards and improve the quality of the program. This process might suggest completely changing or developing new programs. This, of course, requires knowledge and understanding of what the National Board standards are all about. If we feel National Board standards should be the benchmark for accomplished teachers, shouldn't we then begin to prepare them with the skills and knowledge needed to become NBCTs when they are eligible?

Some program changes being considered in one program at GW at the master's preservice level include—

- ensuring that all course work reflects the NBPTS core propositions,
- integrating NBPTS portfolio activities into course assignments,
- introducing all students to the NBPTS assessment components throughout their program,
- placing student interns with NBPTS certified teachers or teacher candidates,
- linking university coursework with research and practice,
- developing extensive professional development partnerships with school sites that encourage teachers to seek NBPTS certification or that have NBCTs,
- encouraging action-related research projects that are site-based and focused on classroom and student needs,
- reorganizing the student professional portfolio around the National Board standards for respective certification areas,
- redesigning the comprehensive examination to reflect NBPTS assessment center activities, and
- incorporating NBCTs into the program as guest lecturers, instructors, and internship supervisors.

Including NBCTs is one of the most important components to consider. The NBCTs are an invaluable resource for any teacher preparation program. They link standards with practice and provide professional expertise for curriculum development. At the end of the preservice master's program the new teacher would be prepared with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to seek and hopefully achieve NBPTS certification once they are eligible.

Option B

Master's programs also could be designed for experienced teachers as they seek NBPTS certification. These programs are beginning to emerge throughout the country. Many of the components might be similar to the master's program mentioned above, but the audience would be experienced teachers who are eligible for NBPTS certification. In addition, the teachers will become leaders and mentors for future NBPTS candidates. Therefore, coursework related to leadership, collaboration, and mentorship should be included in the program. The new master's program would build upon teachers' current practices, include a strong research component to help teachers evaluate the effectiveness of their current practice and the changes they make to their practice during

the program. Thus the master's program would incorporate a process of quality assurance into teacher practices.

Program faculty need to carefully consider the outcomes for these programs. Will one of the requirements for graduation be completion of the NBPTS assessment process—or achieving NBPTS certification? The latter is fraught with serious implications institutions must ponder as they seek to consider the options available. Many issues have been discussed regarding the level at which such a program should be developed at the university. Will this be an advanced master's degree? Will teachers who already have an initial master's degree consider another one? Should universities consider other options, such as a certificate/specialist degree?

Considerations

The experiences of the GW/FCPS partnership validate the need to continue the professional development of teachers. Institutions of higher education might consider partnering with schools to develop continued professional development options aligned with National Board standards. Although these are not master's degree programs, they do provide the mechanism for faculty to gradually become more knowledgeable about the NBPTS. This is critical in the development of a master's program as it provides the faculty and school personnel the opportunity to become familiar and involved with National Board standards. Some possibilities may include—

- ❖ Seminars and workshops for credit that offer teachers additional knowledge about the NBPTS. Topics might include understanding the standards, implementing selected portfolio activities into teaching practice, and writing about teaching practice. Many of these topics can be identified by talking to teachers and school personnel.

- ❖ Graduate level courses which are designed to increase familiarity with the skills and knowledge needed to achieve NBPTS certification and to strengthen content related to specific certification areas. Courses are needed in these areas for teachers who do not possess all of the skills and knowledge needed to achieve NBPTS certification. This might involve changing "methods" courses to integrate National Board standards and portfolio activities into the coursework, offering courses to enhance reflective practice, and encouraging teachers to document their practices in written commentaries. Once teachers become certified, courses that

increase leadership potential and provide strategies to support other teachers as they seek NBPTS certification can be considered.

As new opportunities are considered, additional questions need to be addressed. For example: What role will schools and NBCTs play in the preparation of new and experienced teachers? How will schools and NBCTs partner with the faculty as programs change and these "accomplished" teachers become leaders in professional development? Each school of education program that trains teachers needs to take a long, hard look at the way they prepare teachers for tomorrow. We need to ask ourselves—Are we preparing teachers who know and understand their content? Are we preparing teachers who have the necessary skills and knowledge to inquire about their practice and change it when needed? Are we preparing teachers who are willing and able to meet the changing and multiplicity of needs of all children? How are we preparing ourselves to reflect the NBPTS core propositions and practices in our own programs and practice?

The questions posed and the opportunities discussed in this paper are meant to generate dialogue around the goal of improving quality teaching for the education of all children. The discussion of the experiences of the GW/FCPS partnership was meant to demonstrate the importance and value of partnerships and the positive role they can have as we begin to change master's programs aligned with National Board standards.

Discussion and Recommendations

The development of this partnership provided the basis for GW and FCPS to realize the full potential and value of aligning professional teacher development efforts with National Board standards. For those who continue to focus on the challenges of collaborative relationships between schools and schools of education, we suggest a new positive mind-set: consider the advantages and move beyond the traditional barriers that often block the way towards developing a seamless system of lifelong teacher learning.

We believe we have learned important lessons that may be useful to others in aligning master's degree programs with National Board standards. First, begin with the NBPTS process and work with teachers, helping them as they prepare and engage in the process. This experience provides the common base needed to build or restructure master's degree programs. Second, give teachers increasing responsibility and roles to play as decision makers and trainers of new teachers. Teacher leadership,

especially from NBCTs, is central in teacher education programs designed to improve teaching. As practitioners, mentors, and internship supervisors, the teachers see firsthand what is needed. They are already providing a bridge to link preservice training and schools. Third, develop master's programs aligned with National Board standards and link the development of these programs with critical evaluation of the effects. Fourth, form new professional relationships by including the broad educational community in the design of new programs and opportunities related to changing teacher preparation. Fifth, encourage "accomplished" teachers to remain in the classroom. Provide opportunities for them to serve as lecturers and instructors in teacher training and allow them to share their expertise.

As with other partnerships, we learned there is an enormous time and resource commitment to develop and sustain the effort. Continued commitment from the schools and universities must be present so that partnerships can continue to develop. More forces work against a school/university partnership than for it: separate funding, different rewards and incentives, different short-term goals, different operating practices and governance procedures, and different power players. In fact, it is astonishing that partnerships do develop and a fair number survive and thrive. For those partnerships that make the effort, take the time, and are willing to work together for a common cause, the rewards for the improvement of education can be great.

We also learned that we have much more to learn. Learning from and working with each other should help to expand our thinking and broaden our horizons as we move to design new models of master's degrees to improve the quality of teaching.

As a result of the GW/FCPS partnership, the true value of improving the quality of teaching using National Board standards as the "benchmark" of accomplished teaching was realized. As Carol Sultzman, NBCT, so eloquently states:

> The most rewarding outcome of the NBPTS process is building professional relationships and a strong community of accomplished educators who challenge one another to strive for excellence. Because of the NBPTS certification process, I am now better able to create a more competent and definable instructional program based on my understanding of the total process involved in the education of a child. I have experienced, firsthand, the process of moving from simply 'thinking about what I do' to reflecting about my practice.

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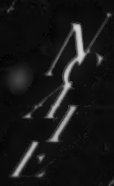

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